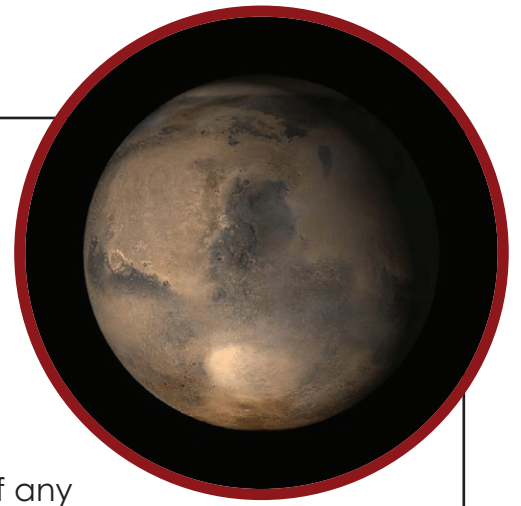


Name: _____

Mars

By Cynthia Sherwood



The “Red Planet”—Mars—is the fourth planet from the sun and one of Earth’s next-door neighbors. Mars was named after the Roman god of war because its reddish-orange color looks a little like blood. The special color actually comes from rust and other minerals in its soil.

The surface of Mars includes many amazing features. There’s a canyon that’s much deeper and longer than the Grand Canyon in Arizona. There’s also a volcano that’s the largest in our solar system. “Olympus Mons” volcano is fourteen miles tall. That’s three times higher than Mount Everest! The base of Olympus Mons is about the size of the state of Missouri.

Scientists say there’s strong evidence that water once flowed over the surface of Mars. They also think there still may be water in some places underneath the surface.

You may have read a book or seen a movie that featured “Martians.” There’s

no evidence of any little green men on Mars, but some scientists do think they’ve found proof that tiny, microscopic creatures once lived on Mars. The evidence comes from meteorites found on Earth. Other scientists say they don’t believe it, so we don’t know the right answer.

Scientists have sent radio-controlled robots to Mars. These machines, called rovers, have cameras, microscopes, and drills on them. Scientists can drive the rovers around the Red Planet, just like the radiocontrolled toy cars many kids have on Earth. The rovers are actually able to send pictures back to Earth.

While rovers roam the planet every day, no person has ever set foot on Mars. NASA has made plans for a manned mission to take place decades from now. Perhaps then we’ll learn the truth of whether there was once life on a planet besides Earth.

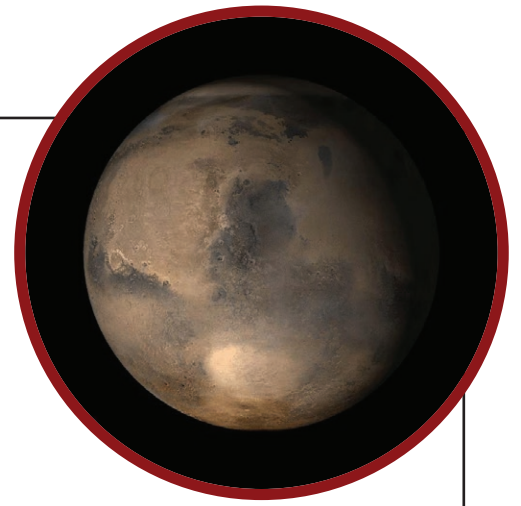


NASA's Curiosity Mars rover

ANSWER KEY

Mars

By Cynthia Sherwood



1. How did Mars get its reddish color?

Martian soil has rust and other minerals in it that give the planet its reddish color.

2. Have there ever been living things on Mars?

a. no

b. yes

c. only below the soil

d. Some scientists think so, but others aren't sure.

3. Which fact about Mars is true?

a. Mars is the only planet with soil.

b. Mars is the only planet with volcanoes.

c. Mars is the closest planet to the sun.

d. None of these facts are true.

4. What is Olympus Mons?

a. a canyon

b. a volcano

c. a crater

d. a moon

5. How many people have walked on Mars?

a. one

b. two

c. eleven

d. none

6. What is a Mars rover?

A radio-controlled robot that moves around the surface taking pictures.